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Takoma Park to Honor Former Mayor Abbott

■ Until his death late last year at age 82, Sammie Abbott spent half a century waging the battles that came to define Takoma Park. Abbott lobbied for tenants' rights, urged that the city become a sanctuary for Guatemalan refugees and, standing in front of bulldozers, blocked construction of a freeway he feared would destroy a neighborhood.

Although there was no doubt Abbott's contributions would be remembered, his friends wanted to ensure a permanent, prominent reminder of his legacy. The City Council recently agreed with their sentiments and approved renaming city hall in memory of the late mayor, who served from 1980 to 1985.

As soon as \$2,000 in private money can be raised, the city government building at 7500 Maple Ave. will add the words "Sam Abbott Citizens' Center" below the sign that now reads "City of Takoma Park Municipal Building."

Council member Marc Elrich, who introduced the resolution to include Abbott's name on city hall, said some of the former mayor's critics objected to the gesture. "Sam could be a difficult person at times ... but you have to weigh a mortal's faults against a mortal's accomplishments," Elrich said, adding, "He did more things for the city than anyone has ever done."